

# **SOCIALISM THROUGH VICTORY:**

**A Reply to the Policy  
of the I.L.P.**

**By J. R. CAMPBELL**

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# SOCIALISM THROUGH VICTORY:

## A REPLY TO THE POLICY OF THE I.L.P.

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**A**S this pamphlet is being written the whole world is expecting, with the coming of the summer, the opening of the decisive phase of the war. The question of whether, on the basis of the Soviet Union's winter victories, we are going to have a speedy ending of the war with the defeat of the Fascist states, or an inconclusive result involving the indefinite prolongation of the war—all this is going to be decided on the battlefields in the course of the next few months. A leader of the Independent Labour Party, against which this pamphlet is directed, declared recently in a speech at Newcastle that "he thought this year would be the decisive one" (*New Leader*, February 28, 1942).

If this year will be decisive it follows that the working class must ask itself whether it can be indifferent as to the character of the decision which may be reached this year, and if it cannot afford to be indifferent, how it can use its strength to assist in obtaining the decision that working class interests, which are the interests of all progressive mankind, demand.

To answer this question necessitates a discussion of the character of the war in its present phase. Is it a pure business man's war for trade and territory, to whose outcome in terms of victory for either side the workers can afford to be indifferent, or is it a war whose outcome in terms of victory for one side or the other will determine the whole future of the working class.



## IS IT A BUSINESS MAN'S WAR?

The Independent Labour Party holds that this war remains fundamentally a business man's war; that the workers can afford to be indifferent to its outcome in terms of the victory of one side over the other, and that, therefore, instead of throwing their weight on the side of one or other group of warring States, they should pursue a third policy which (1) will end the war quicker than it can be ended by any other means, and (2) will ensure the triumph of a social order which will lay the foundations of peace throughout the world.

Few workers will doubt that if there were a practicable third policy which would accomplish these things it ought to be wholeheartedly supported. On the contrary, if this third policy is a hotch-potch of pernicious nonsense, calculated at worst to help the victory of Fascism, and at best to prolong the war indefinitely, it ought to be exposed as the putrid thing it is.

## NAZISM WHITE-WASHED

How does the Independent Labour Party estimate the character of the war in its present stage? Let the resolution of its recent Congress speak for itself.

"The I.L.P. re-affirms its opposition to the war which is fundamentally an Imperialist conflict arising from the economic antagonisms of the capitalistic state.

"The German state is aiming at Imperialist economic domination in Europe. The Japanese state is aiming at Imperialist economic domination in India. The British state is defending its Empire in four continents and resisting the challenge of a rival Power in Europe. The U.S. state is defending its economic domination of South America and its Imperialist interests in the Pacific and China. Those four Powers are fighting to extend their economic domination over large parts of the world."

Now, this second paragraph contains a blatant half-truth when it declares that Nazi Germany is only aiming at economic domination in Europe. Lest we should go wrong in the meaning of this term, the paragraph tells us that the United States is exercising "economic domination" in South America.

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Here it is asserted for all to see that Nazi Germany is aiming to establish in Europe an economic overlordship comparable to that which U.S. Big Business exercises in South America—an overlordship which permits a considerable measure of political independence for the South American states, which permits trade unions and workers' parties. Is it not clear that the sole aim of "economic domination" is ascribed to the Nazis in order to conceal that they are also out to establish Fascist political domination in Europe—to establish a regime of political savagery based on concentration camps, torture and massacre. Now, this white-washing of the Nazi criminals is not accidental. It is essential to do so in order to afford the semblance of a rational basis for the political conclusions which follow.

### THE SOVIET UNION

The resolution proceeds:—

Another great Power, Soviet Russia, is involved in the war because German Imperialism required its economic resources to fulfil its aims and recognised that Soviet Russia was a menace to its object of European domination."

Here, again, there is a certain process of white-washing visible. Nazi Germany does not appear to have, according to this analysis, any hatred for the Soviet Union as a Socialist state. It merely wants to grab some of its resources and to stop it menacing Nazi Germany's object of "European domination."

However, here we come to the crux of the question. The Nazis and Japs are aiming to extend their empires and their political systems at the expense of Britain, U.S.A., and the Soviet Union and to destroy the latter as a Socialist state. Britain, U.S.A., and the Soviet Union are in an alliance resisting this drive; in other words, Britain and the U.S.A., while defending their Empires, to the extent that they fight Nazi Germany and Japan, to the extent to which they supply the Soviet Union with munitions, are objectively helping the first Workers' State to defend itself. Can any rational Socialist argue that there is no difference between a Nazi-Jap



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alliance which has as one of its objects the destruction of the Soviet State, and a British-American-Soviet-Chinese alliance which has for one of its objects the defence of the Soviet State? The Independent Labour Party continues to frame its policy on the assumption that there is no difference between the one side or the other. Of course this will be denied. But no other meaning can be attached to the opening sentence of the resolution: "The I.L.P. re-affirms its opposition to the war." Not, be it noted, to war in general but to this particular war in its present phase. If one believes that in a war one side is pursuing more progressive objects than another, one does not "oppose the war." Of course, one may want the war, with its waste of life, to end as soon as possible, and in that case one will do his utmost to ensure a speedy victory for the progressive side. But when one opposes a war one damns both sets of belligerents as equally reactionary.

### THE DUTY OF SOCIALISTS

From this the I.L.P. draws the conclusion that the duty of Socialists is to treat the alliance which includes the Soviet Union, as being equally as reactionary as the alliance of the Fascist States and to strive with might and main to politically undermine and then overthrow the governments of either side.

"The Socialist Movement in each country has the knowledge that in the other countries Socialists are working to the same end and that as the war goes on and its disastrous effects increase, the forces striving to end both the war and capitalism, which caused it, will grow in strength. Every advance to Socialism in one country will encourage and assist those who are carrying on the struggle for, and organisation for, the opportunity to which we are moving." (Basic resolution at I.L.P. Conference, Easter, 1942.)

### NO AID TO SOVIET UNION

The I.L.P. Conference had the knowledge that people who openly propagate such views may contest by-elections in Britain, but are tortured and executed in Fascist countries, but no conclusion is to be drawn from that knowledge.

They tell the Socialists in Britain and the U.S.A. that

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they have no special obligations to aid a Socialist country struggling for its life against a Fascist invasion; they have no special obligations to ensure that Britain and the U.S.A. send increased quantities of munitions to the Soviet Union, and if there are any British politicians and generals who believe that a Second Front in Europe should be opened in order to expedite the defeat of Nazi Germany, it is the duty of the I.L.P. to do all in its power to get the workers in Britain to oppose that policy in spite of the obvious fact that a Second Front would help the Socialist Soviet Union to clear its soil of Fascist invaders.

Under the guise of fighting for Socialism in Britain, the I.L.P. is telling the British workers that their Socialist duty is to oppose any aid to the Socialist State that is already existing.

Sane Socialists would regard the above assertions as exaggerations were we not able to support them with the following extract from the I.L.P. Conference:—

“An amendment seeking to incorporate in the policy laid down in the resolution the advocacy of the production and transport of war materials to the Soviet Union under workers’ control was moved by W. Tait (St. Andrew’s and Edinburgh). He argued that the Party had to make it more clear to the workers just where it stood with regard to aid for Russia. The amendment was designed so that the I.L.P. could render effective help without adopting the same attitude as the Communists. Hanton (Wimbledon) seconded. He thought the I.L.P. could not consistently reject this suggestion after having struggled to send arms to Spain.

“James Carmichael opposed the amendment on behalf of the N.A.C., declaring that when the working class was in a position to direct production and transport of arms to aid Russia it would be in a position to remove the Churchill Government. The logical end of the policy advocated was a Second Front in the West. Comrades must not let their emotional feelings on the subject of Aid to Russia sway them.” (“New Leader,” April, 11th.)

## SOCIALISM TRAVESTIED

No, the comrades were to stifle any emotion of Socialist solidarity and refuse to drive for more munitions for the



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Soviet Union because the logic of this meant driving for a Second Front in the West.

This vile attitude of opposing assistance to a Socialist state at war is defended by the use of the most hallowed Socialist phrases.

"The honorable member will probably remember the basic slogan of the Socialist Movement, "Workers of all lands, unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win!" This has been a basic principle of international Socialism from the beginning of the foundation. Do you tell me it is going to be achieved by the Russian workers slaughtering German workers on the battlefields." (James Maxton, M.P., in House of Commons, November 27th, 1941.)

A stranger unacquainted with the issues would imagine from this that some persons were inciting the Russian workers to slaughter peaceful German workers. They would never gather that the Russian workers were at peace when their country was treacherously invaded by a German Fascist army; that the workers and peasants of the various nationalities in the Soviet Union had united and thrown off their chains and the German Fascist invaders were striving to rivet the chains on to them again. The class peculiarities are forgotten. That a Socialist state is fighting a Fascist state (a thing the I.L.P. has called it to do in the past), that a Socialist army is fighting a Fascist army—all this is ignored and only the fact of worker killing worker is brought out. "*Workers of the World Unite*," which was the rallying cry to the workers of the world to achieve Socialism, is now used to prevent the workers of the world uniting here and now to render immediate assistance to their comrades in the Soviet Union who have achieved Socialism. Never was a noble appeal so shamelessly travestied.

## IF NAZIS WON

Yet the I.L.P. leaders understand that were the Soviet Union defeated (which some of them gloatingly think is possible) this country might have to surrender to Fascism.

"In the spring, after Japan has safeguarded her bases and her mainland, she may attempt a gigantic effort with Hitler to try

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and crush Russia. If that were accomplished this country would be "completely on the spot." And do not rule it out from being a possibility. To me, a layman, looking round the field of operations, that is the most natural thing to attempt. If Russia were crushed between Japan and Germany, then they could sit back very pretty and wait upon some form of agreement with this country or surrender to terminate the war." (J. McGovern, M.P., House of Commons, reported in "New Leader," February 7th.)

We do not share this estimate of Russia's strength, but consider the argument for a moment. Russia, says McGovern, may be defeated this summer. If she is, Britain may have to surrender to Fascism. Even the I.L.P. would hardly deny that such a surrender would postpone the possibility of a Socialist government in Britain for generations. It would be a terrible defeat for the British workers. Yet the I.L.P. tells the British workers: "Don't campaign for more munitions to be sent to the Soviet Union, don't demand the opening of a Second Front," while asserting that if Soviet Russia were defeated Britain might have to surrender to Fascism.

"This is the decisive year," McGovern says. If the decision goes in Germany's favour Britain will have to surrender to Fascism. But don't do anything about it except conduct a propaganda campaign for Socialism, and spread the suggestion that Russia will be defeated anyhow.

## ARMS — TO-MORROW, PERHAPS

Of course, the I.L.P. is not in favour of withholding munitions for ever—or so it says. It will spend this decisive year advocating a British revolution headed by Messrs. Maxton, McGovern and Brockway, with a general staff of conscientious objectors in charge of operations, and when that government has been finally set up, the I.L.P. Conference has decided that:

"A Socialist Britain would give every assistance possible, including the supply of weapons, if necessary, to workers' countries which were being compelled to defend themselves against Fascist aggression, whether internal or external." (Basic resolution at I.L.P. Conference.)



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Is that clear? "1942 is the decisive year." Russia and Britain are in danger. The British capitalist government is sending munitions to the Soviet Union. The I.L.P. is opposed, however, to it sending an increased supply or to rendering more direct military assistance to the Soviet Union. But if the Soviet Union should scrape through the decisive year 1942 without further assistance and will wait until Messrs. Maxton, McGovern and Brockway organise a British revolution, then a British Socialist government will in the year 19— provide it with some of the weapons that the I.L.P. refused to help it to get in the year 1942.

### AN INSULT TO HEROISM

We are presented with this fireside sophistry at a moment when the whole world is admiring the Socialist heroism of the Soviet people. In the Soviet Union most fit men have been mobilised and those remaining in civilian life, together with the mobilised womanhood of the country, are working night and day to supply the fighting forces with what they need. Over large areas of the country the people have destroyed their own Socialist property, the accumulation of years of devoted labour, rather than allow it to fall into the hands of the enemy. They have performed industrial miracles by transferring large plants from the battle zone hundreds of miles to the rear and by getting them into operation again. Daily, countless acts of heroism are taking place as the guerrillas wage unceasing war on the enemy.

Instead of being filled with the desire to rush to the aid of their Socialist comrades the I.L.P. weeps maudlin tears over "Russian and German workers slaughtering each other," and in effect says to the defenders of the Soviet state: "Our government is sending you munitions, but as it is a capitalist government we cannot conscientiously demand that it sends you more; our government is the military ally of your government but we cannot conscientiously ask that it opens a Second Front, but our three M.P.'s and our handful of members are opening a campaign for 'Socialism now,' and

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if and when we overthrow the present capitalist government we may send you some munitions."

### **WHERE CAPITALIST INTERESTS LIE**

Now, all this is accompanied by some pseudo-Socialist claptrap to the effect that "the British capitalists will only help the Soviet Union to the extent that their interests dictate."

We have heard all this before, but it is nonsense. The British capitalists try to fix wages and unemployed relief at levels that their interests dictate, but working class action has often succeeded in forcing them to give increases in wages and unemployed relief. Besides, in this connection we have to remember the division in the ranks of the ruling class. There is undoubtedly a section who fear the social repercussions of a Soviet victory over Nazi Germany and will strive to minimise the assistance given. There is another section which sees in a joint British-American-Soviet victory the only hope of British survival.

That is why the working class, by utilising this division in the ranks of the ruling class, can force more munitions and more direct military assistance for the Soviet Union—as a contribution to the joint victory of the allied peoples.

### **WHAT HITLERITES WOULD DO**

Suppose, however, emissaries of Hitler and the German General Staff had influence in the councils of the allied governments. What would they seek to do? They would seek to persuade each government to look after its own section of the battle-fronts, to refuse to participate in a co-ordinated strategy, to refuse to throw its weight into helping its ally fighting on the most vital section of the front where the majority of the Germany army was engaged. That would be good Nazi Fifth Column strategy and it differs in no wise from the strategy of the I.L.P.

Were such emissaries able to influence the civil population they would strive to stir up civil turmoil in the rear in order



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to paralyse military operations on the battle-front. That is what the I.L.P. is envisaging when it advocates the overthrow of the Churchill Government by mass action. Now, dear reader, don't get me all wrong. There is no danger of the I.L.P. overthrowing anything. The I.L.P. could not organise a decent sized demonstration let alone organise a British revolution. We are merely examining the logic of their position.

"Within a fairly short space of time John McGovern believed there would be a strong revulsion of feeling against the war. As it developed, the I.L.P. would be ready to direct any Socialist tendency towards taking over the Government and ending the war by Socialism." ("New Leader," April 11th.)

In other words, they hope that the British people will get fed-up with fighting the war against Hitler and will support the I.L.P. in setting up a government which will end the war by methods we will examine in a moment.

### HOW TO GET NEW GOVERNMENT

How is such a government going to be set up? Let Mr. Fenner Brockway tell us.

"The opportunity to obtain a parliamentary majority during the war or immediately after the war is unlikely; even if it were gained the power of a Socialist Government, particularly in circumstances of constitutional chaos and instability to end the control of the possessing class would depend on the support and action of the workers in the factories and localities and on the action of the men still in the Fighting Forces." (Fenner Brockway, "New Leader," January 31st, 1942.)

There is the blue-print. First, we get fed-up with fighting Hitler and look around for a Saviour. There is the I.L.P. at hand which says that it is unlikely that the workers can obtain a parliamentary majority during the war, and in any case the main thing is the mass action of the workers and soldiers against the possessing class and their government. Of course, the possessing class would resist, there would be a nice little civil war, and finally the I.L.P. Government would be installed. That is what the I.L.P. hopes will take place in Britain in this "decisive year." As a prescription for

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creating chaos in Britain, thereby helping Hitler to defeat his enemies one by one, there is a lot to be said for it. As a means to the early ending of the war, it is nonsense. We do not believe for a moment that this is likely to happen ; but what can happen is that confusion in the minds of some workers can be created, the drive for a greater war effort can be disorganised, and aid for the Soviet Union can be impeded. That is the meaning of the I.L.P. " Socialism Now " policy.

### A GOVERNMENT MINUS AN ARMY

Let us glance at the fantasy of the I.L.P. Government set up to end the war. How will it defend itself if Hitler should try to attack it? Read the following extracts from the I.L.P. Easter Conference and ponder.

"There was a spirited discussion of an amendment from St. Andrew's branch urging the necessity "to prepare the minds of the workers for the creation of a Workers' Red Army to defend a Workers' Socialist Britain." W. Tait said that it would make clear that they were prepared to defend a Socialist Britain if they achieved one. Hanton (Wimbledon) and a Hammersmith delegate in the Army supported, but the pacifist view was voiced by J. Southall (Birmingham City). Tom Taylor (Mosspark) thought the Party should maintain a clear distinction between itself and other parties by stressing the desire for peace aspects in its policy, a course with which the amendment would conflict. Carmichael N.A.C. opposed. Amendment lost." ("New Leader," April 11th, 1942.)

Here the whole claptrap of " Socialism Now " is exploded. The chairman of the conference, John McGovern, declares that " in a short space of time there would be a revulsion against the war and the I.L.P. would be ready to direct any Socialist tendency towards taking over the Government." Some branches want, therefore, to assure the British people that this government arising in the midst of war would have a Socialist Army to defend the British people. Whereat a young conscientious objector gets up and pooh-poohs the idea and insists that what is necessary is to stress " the desire for peace aspects " of I.L.P. policy. Is it not clear that "Socialism



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Now" is not a responsible proposal to fight for a Socialist government but is simply a cover for the policy of opposing any immediate aid for the Soviet Union.

What would this shadowy government do? What is its proposal for ending the war quicker than it can be ended by an all-out Allied Offensive against Nazi Germany? Let Mr. McGovern tell us.

"On the day we end the British capitalist Imperialist system of violence and robbery, on that day we will have earned the right to ask the German workers to revolt against Hitler oppression and brutality." (Speech at I.L.P. Conference, Easter, 1942.)

If this has any meaning it is that the British workers have no right to ask the German workers to revolt until they have overthrown their own capitalists first. Let us examine this argument. If the German workers revolted against Hitler they would have on their side a powerful Socialist government, with an absolute military superiority on the European continent—a government which, through its leader, Stalin, has pronounced against any policy of punishing the German people: they would have on their side the British and American Labour Movements, only too anxious to see Socialism and Trade Unionism blossoming on European soil: they would have on their side a revived Labour Movement in France. There are sufficient forces here to put a strait-jacket on the Lord Vansittarts. It is not unreasonable to ask the German workers to revolt when the conditions mature to enable them to do so, for the anti-Imperialist forces on the Allied side are strong.

But the McGoverns who consider that we have no right to ask the German workers to revolt under such conditions think that they have a perfect right, after having asked the British workers to withhold assistance from their Soviet ally, to stage a revolt in Britain when Hitler's military power is not yet decisively broken, when the Nazis still remain unchallenged masters of Germany. Of what use is it for people who preach this to declare "we are as much against Hitler as you are."

## APPEALS NOT ENOUGH

Of course, appeals to the German workers to revolt are not enough. Before they can revolt the Nazi terror machine has got to be cracked, and the only way to crack it is by a combined offensive of the Allied powers in Europe. When the cracks widen the German workers will have the chance to accelerate the end of Nazism. That is why the military offensive and the appeal to the German workers are inseparable.

The question must be asked—how is it that a Socialist party can fall to the depths of pro-Fascism that the I.L.P. has? We should answer, because of the two dominant trends in the Party, namely, pacifism and virulent anti-Soviet hatred. The pacifist trend is the oldest. It is a trend that flourished in Britain because the world dominance of British Imperialism was secured not by a large Army but by a great mechanised Navy. Behind the protection of this Navy safeguarding the country from invasion all kinds of religious-pacifist sects could flourish in a manner impossible in Continental Europe. Of course, when Fascism comes the doctrines of pure pacifism begin to look as foolish as Gandhism does in face of a Japanese invasion. Intellectually a number of pacifists change their position, but the old emotional set-up remains. Hence, while declaring their willingness to fight against Fascism they insist that they will only do so under a milk-white Socialist Government. So they refuse to help the people's front government in Spain, and join with Anarchist visionaries and Fascist agents in a struggle to undermine that government while it is fighting the Fascist enemy—a tactic they now ask the British workers to imitate in relation to the existing world alliance against Fascism.

They are continually being used as tools of big business sections. Mr. Neville Chamberlain was no pacifist. He was the leader of that section of British big business who believed that the British Empire could best be defended by encouraging German and Italian Fascism to grow, but directing them



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against the Soviet Union. When in pursuit of this policy he favoured the lifting of sanctions against Italy and the handing of Czecho-Slovakia to Nazi Germany, the I.L.P. hailed him as the saviour of peace. "Well done thou good and faithful servant" roared McGovern in the House of Commons. Of course, when his policy miscarried, Chamberlain had to fight for the Empire after all, but McGovern can still regale the I.L.P. Conference with a picture of war-mad M.P.'s forcing his idol to declare war. Close bonds of affection were established between the I.L.P. and this section of Tories. Maxton tells the House that he sees no reason for dismissing Captain Margesson. Those Tories who fear a Soviet victory more than they do a Nazi victory, find the I.L.P. which is opposing the sending of more munitions to the Soviet Union and is opposing the Second Front, as their closest allies.

It is difficult to say where this pacifist trend ends and where the anti-Soviet trend begins. They are frequently united in the same person. The leaders—men devoid of political principle—derive their arguments from both in accordance with what they want to prove. And so out of this mixture there comes a pro-Fascist policy thinly camouflaged by a few rotten tatters of Socialist phraseology.

### APPEAL TO LABOUR MEN

Nevertheless, this Party in the conditions of political truce can still make a limited appeal to Labour voters who are sick of the passivity of their own Party and are anxious about the prospects of Socialism in the future.

We can appreciate this anxiety. But the I.L.P. way leads away from Socialism. To-day there is a great Socialist revival based on the mighty struggle of the Red Army. There is a growing contempt for the ruling class of Great Britain. There is at the same time a solid desire to defeat Nazism. Basing itself on those trends, the Labour movement must make itself the dynamic force in the British war effort. It can rally the country for victory in 1942, to be secured by the opening of the Second Front, by an enormous increase in war produc-

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tion and by granting freedom to India. The Labour movement can insist on the elimination of the representatives of the vested interests from the State control apparatus; it can insist on a really efficient system of State control over all industry, with Labour participating at each stage of the control from the factory, through the Regional Board to the State Planning Commission. This is not yet Socialism by a long way. But if the Labour movement wins the British people for such a programme of victory it can carry them a stage further forward when Hitler has been defeated. Away with I.L.P. predictions of the victory of Nazi Germany over the Soviet Union in 1942. The wish is clearly father to the thought here. The Nazi army is profoundly shaken. A united Allied drive can win victory in 1942.

The Communist Party calls on all who agree with this policy to join its ranks and help to make the British Labour Movement the organiser of People's Unity, the dynamic force for victory. That is the only way forward to Socialism that lies open to the British people.

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